

# **STEP-BY-STEP**

**2nd Ed.**

## **A GUIDE TO MOBILITY TECHNIQUES**

### **STUDY GUIDE**

### **SPECIAL TECHNIQUES**

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# INTRODUCTION

Most of the modules in the Step-By-Step series focus on specific mobility techniques that are used for travel in specific environments and in special situations. This module, however, breaks with that format because not all mobility techniques involve actual travel. Some techniques involve interacting with the environment outside of a travel situation.

## Exploration & Seating

Exploration techniques are used to systematically explore a tabletop or explore an object encountered during travel. They can enable the traveler to identify features of an object (e.g., the buttons and dispensing area on a vending machine), to locate objects on a surface, and to find dropped objects. Exploration skills are used in additional situations, such as verifying that a seat is empty before sitting down.

Seating skills are used in a variety of environments and include safety procedures and methods for storing the cane.

## Handling Unsolicited Assistance

When traveling independently, the traveler may be approached by a person who, with the best of intentions, wants to provide assistance but does not know how to do so appropriately. Skills in this section focus on how the traveler can politely accept or decline such assistance and avoid being put in a hazardous situation inadvertently (e.g., pulled off a curb unexpectedly as a person attempts to help her across the street).

# **EXPLORATION & SEATING**

# SEARCH PATTERNS

## Purpose

To search or explore an area or object using a systematic method to ensure complete coverage

## Prerequisite Techniques

None

## Teaching Environments

Begin with a small, clear area with definite boundaries, such as a lunch tray or small table (i.e., small enough for the traveler to be able to reach around without physically moving from a seated or standing position).

Practice the mechanics of this technique on progressively larger areas (e.g., larger tables). Gradually introduce objects (e.g., keys, coins, desktop items) into the area for the traveler to find. Practice on a variety of both vertical and horizontal surfaces (e.g., windows, the floor).

Progress to using this technique to explore objects in the environment such as vending machines, bookcases, and elevator control panels. Emphasize the skills of localizing, discriminating, and identifying salient features of these objects.

Once the traveler has mastered the basic procedures, extend these systematic search techniques to exploring rooms, buildings, and even larger open areas, such as yards or play areas.

## Skills

A basic premise with all search pattern skills is to begin the search at a known reference point (sometimes called a "focal point"). A corner of the area to be searched or the center point of the nearest side are often used as reference points. The traveler should return to the reference point any time she becomes disoriented.

## Perimeter and Gridline

This skill is generally used when the boundary of an area is known, such as a tabletop. It can also be used to systematically explore objects. This skill provides the most complete information on object-to-object relationships and can be employed in self-familiarization techniques used to explore unfamiliar rooms, areas, or even buildings.

## Perimeter

The perimeter procedure enables the traveler to determine or verify the size and shape of the area to be searched and to locate objects along the edges of the area.

1. Holding one hand at a reference point (e.g., a table corner or the middle of the near side), the traveler traces the perimeter of the area to be searched in one continuous motion with her other hand. She moves her hand lightly, keeping it flat on the surface as she moves it (see Figure 1.01).
  - The traveler can trace the outer boundary of the area to be searched in either a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.
  - Tracing the perimeter is used to identify the size, shape, and boundary of the area and to note the location and relationships of major landmarks (e.g., corners, objects) along the periphery.
  - For greater efficiency, the traveler can mentally remember the location of the reference point and use both hands to trace the perimeter in a symmetrical motion; each hand traces the perimeter from the reference point to a point where they meet at the far side of the area and then returns to the reference point (see Figure 1.02).



**Figure 1.01**

The traveler holds one hand at a reference point while tracing the perimeter of the area with her other hand, as shown by white arrows.



**Figure 1.02**

The traveler uses both hands to trace the perimeter in a symmetrical motion, as shown by white arrows.

### **Gridline**

The gridline procedure enables the traveler to find objects located within the field of an area. It also enables her to note the location of objects within the area, as well as their relationship to the reference point and to each other.

1. Following completion of the perimeter search, the traveler holds her hands with her palms flat and with her fingers closed and straight. She moves her hands lightly in the following way:
  - The traveler places both hands at a reference point. She moves one hand lightly to the opposite side of the area, keeping it flat on the surface as she moves it. Upon reaching the opposite side, she moves one hand width up and returns to the starting side, searching the adjacent area (see Figures 1.03a and 1.03b).



**Figure 1.03a**

The traveler performs a gridline search by moving her hands systematically over the area, as shown by a white arrow.





**Figures 1.03b**

The traveler then moves one hand width up and returns to the starting side, searching the adjacent area, as shown by a white arrow.

2. She repeats these motions across the entire area or until she locates the object(s) for which she is searching.
  - If the traveler does not find the object(s), she should then repeat this procedure in the other direction (i.e. horizontal vs. vertical) to cover any areas that she might have missed earlier.

**Note:** Searching with a flat hand with the fingers closed and straight helps ensure that the traveler's hand does not pass over small, flat objects such as coins.

When searching for sharp or delicate objects, the traveler can curl her fingers lightly to reduce the likelihood of injuring her hands or of breaking objects (see Figure 1.04). Using the fingertips can also facilitate tactile discrimination on varying textures and surfaces.



**Figure 1.04**

The traveler curls her fingers lightly when searching for sharp or delicate objects, such as the thumbtack identified in this photo with a label and white arrow.

When searching with the gridline method on a surface that might hold small objects, the traveler can take the following precautions to avoid inadvertently knocking the object off the surface:

- On a table that is against a wall, trail only towards the wall.
- On a circular table, trail towards the center in a spoke pattern.
- On a table that is not against a wall, the traveler trails toward herself unless she expects to find something that she does not want spilled in her lap.
- The traveler searches from each side toward the center.

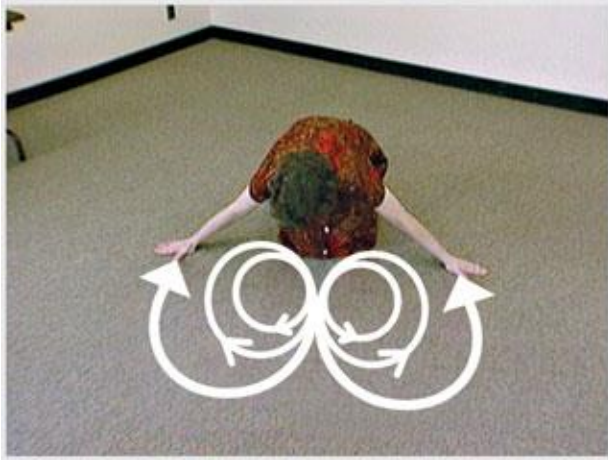
If the traveler prefers, she can perform the Perimeter & Gridline skill bilaterally by using both hands to trace the perimeter in a symmetrical motion, beginning and ending at the reference point. She then searches the area within the perimeter, using both hands in a symmetrical, gridline pattern.

## Circle

An easy, systematic method for searching an area that does not have definite boundaries (e.g., the ground); the "Circle" method is an alternative to the "Fan" method.

1. The traveler begins with her hands at midline, near her body (the reference point) and flat on the surface to be searched. She moves her hands in concentric circles of increasing size, covering the area in front of her, between her knees (if kneeling on the ground) or feet (if squatting on the ground) and to her sides until she locates the object (see Figure 1.05).
  - The traveler can either keep one hand at the reference point while searching to one side of midline with her other hand (and then switch hands to search the opposite side), or she can use both hands to search both sides simultaneously.

**Note:** If the traveler fails to find the object, she moves forward using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique, and then begins to search the next area (see LOCATING DROPPED OBJECTS).



**Figure 1.05**

The traveler moves her hands in concentric circles of increasing size until she locates the object, as shown by two white arrows circling in opposite directions.

## Fan

An easy, systematic method for searching an area that does not have definite boundaries (e.g., the ground); it is an alternative to the method entitled "Circle."

1. The traveler begins with her hands at midline, near her body (the reference point), and flat on the surface to be searched.
2. The traveler moves her hands in fan motions (analogous to windshield wiper motions) of increasing size and distance from her body, covering the area in front of her, between her knees (if kneeling on the ground) or feet (if squatting on the ground) and to her sides until she locates the object (see Figure 1.06).
  - The traveler can either keep one hand at the reference point while searching with her other hand to one side of midline (and then switch hands to search the opposite side), or she can use both hands to search both sides simultaneously.

**Note:** If the traveler fails to find the object, she moves forward using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique, and then begins to search the next area (see LOCATING DROPPED OBJECTS).



**Figure 1.06**

The traveler moves her hands in fan motions of increasing size and distance from her body until she locates the object, as shown by white arcing arrows.

### Modification

The traveler can also perform the Fan Search with her foot while she is standing. This modification often works well if the object has dropped close to the traveler's body; it is also useful if the ground is dirty.

### Fan Search with a Cane

This is a method for searching a large area more quickly than can be done by hand; it should be performed only when there are no people nearby who might be tripped or contacted uncomfortably by the cane.

This skill only works if the object being sought is too tall or thick for the cane to glide over and fail to detect (for example, a coin might be missed as the cane shaft can often glide right over it).

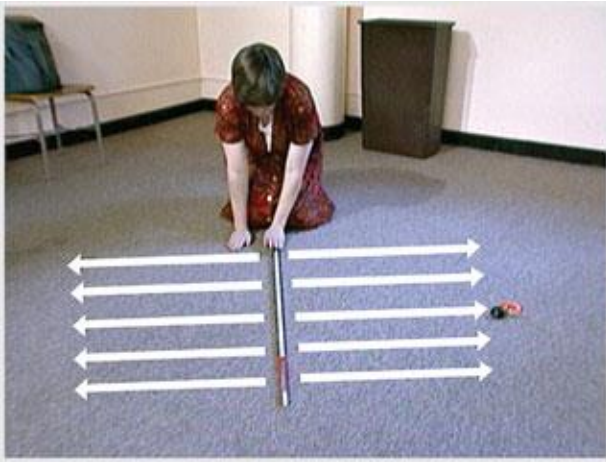
1. The traveler places her cane flat on the surface to be searched. The cane is at midline, with the top of the grip near her body and the tip pointing away from her.
2. Holding the top of the grip stationary (to act as a pivot point), the traveler slowly pivots the cane in an arc from left to right (or vice versa), covering the area in front of her and to the sides (see Figure 1.07). Alternatively, the traveler can move the entire cane from side to side, keeping the tip pointing away from her and sweeping a rectangular area (see Figure 1.08).
  - The traveler will be able to hear or feel when the cane contacts the object.

**Note:** If the traveler fails to find the object, she moves forward using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique, and then begins to search the next area (see LOCATING DROPPED OBJECTS).



**Figure 1.07**

Holding the top of the grip stationary, the traveler slowly pivots the cane in an arc until she locates the object, as shown by a large curved white arrow.



**Figure 1.08**

The traveler slowly moves the entire cane from side to side, sweeping a rectangular area, until she locates the object, as shown by white arrows pointing away from the cane on each side.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler is not systematic in her use of search patterns.

### Correction:

Being systematic in the use of search patterns ensures that the traveler will not miss the object for which she is looking.

**Error:**

When using the Perimeter and Gridline method, the traveler fails to do a perimeter search before beginning the gridline search.

**Correction:**

Beginning with a perimeter search enables the traveler to locate objects along the perimeter of the search area. Also, knowing the location of such objects can help the traveler avoid pushing them off the surface inadvertently during the gridline search.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to hold her hands flat against the surface when searching for an object.

**Correction:**

Holding her hands flat against the surface increases the area covered by the traveler's hands and minimizes the chances of missing small objects, especially those that are flat (e.g., coins).

**Error:**

The traveler fails to move her hands in a slow, gentle manner when searching for an object.

**Correction:**

Moving her arms in a slow, gentle manner when searching for an object minimizes the possibility of knocking small objects away upon contact.

## Notes for Teachers

Systematic search patterns are used in all areas of a person's life (e.g., cleaning, dusting). They can be transferred to any environment and incorporated into a variety of mobility skills, including locating dropped objects and self-familiarization to an object, room, building, or other area.

While each skill can be used in a given situation, it often works best to use the search pattern that best conforms to the shape of the area.

- While perimeter and gridline searches can be performed on the floor or on areas without definite boundaries, they are primarily used for tabletops, rooms, or other areas with definite boundaries.
- Circle and fan search methods usually are used on the floor rather than on tabletops in order to avoid inadvertently pushing objects off the edge of the table.

Using compass skills may help one to maintain orientation to an area being searched. In turn, teaching and practicing search patterns can be used to reinforce a traveler's understanding and use of previously learned compass directions.

## Related Techniques

Contacting & Exploring Objects

Elevators

Locating Dropped Objects



# LOCATING DROPPED OBJECTS

## Purpose

A systematic and efficient means by which to locate and retrieve dropped objects

## Prerequisite Techniques

Search Patterns

Upper Hand & Forearm (Modified)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, indoor area that is free of clutter and has a hard, smooth surface (e.g., tile, vinyl) and use objects that produce a noticeable sound when dropped. A hard surface provides optimum auditory feedback indicating where a dropped object lands. Later, progress to areas with surfaces that provide less auditory feedback (e.g., carpet).

Begin using objects that do not roll (e.g., keys). When the traveler is able to locate these objects successfully, progress to locating items that bounce off a wall or other surface when dropped, and/or items that roll (e.g., coins).

Eventually progress to areas where there are tables or other items under which the object might roll.

Progress finally to a variety of indoor and outdoor areas, including environments with varying auditory feedback (e.g., stairwell areas with echoes).

## Skill

1. Immediately after dropping an object, the traveler stops walking and listens for the sound that the object makes as it lands.
  - Often, the object lands immediately below the hand that dropped it.
  - If the object bounces off a wall or another object and/or rolls when it is dropped, the traveler monitors the sound of the object as it bounces and/or rolls and then as it comes to a stop.
2. The traveler faces the sound and, using the appropriate cane or protective techniques, walks up to the object.
  - If the object sounds as if it has landed more than an arm's reach distance from her feet, the traveler should estimate the distance and walk up to a point immediately in front of the object's estimated location.
    - Walking slightly less than the estimated distance to the object most often places the traveler in front of it and also makes it less likely that the traveler will either walk past or step on the object.



3. The traveler either squats down, keeping her trunk erect (baseball catcher's position) or she kneels down.
  - Squatting down with her trunk erect keeps the traveler from bumping her face into an object under which the dropped item might have rolled. Some travelers, however, may find it physically difficult to squat down.
4. The traveler places her hands on the ground. As she bends forward to do so, she uses the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her face in case the object has rolled near or under a table or chair (see Figure 2.01).



**Figure 2.01**

The traveler uses the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her face as she bends forward to place her hand on the ground.

5. Using her knees (if in a kneeling position) or feet (if in a squatting position) as a reference point, the traveler locates the object using the SEARCH PATTERNS technique. She should search between her feet, in front of her, and to her sides as far as she can reach.
  - If the traveler fails to find the object, she then moves forward a one-step distance using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her head against contact with objects in the environment (e.g., a table) and begins to search a new area.
6. Upon locating the object, the traveler rises to stand. If she is in an unfamiliar area or if there is a possibility that the object might have rolled under a table, the traveler should use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her head from bumping the table as she stands up (see Figure 2.02).



**Figure 2.02**

The traveler uses the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her head from bumping objects as she stands up.

## General Modifications

The traveler can also remain standing and use her foot to search in an organized pattern, only squatting or kneeling down if she is unable to locate the dropped object with her foot.

To cover a large area quickly, the traveler can slowly sweep with her cane, as described in the SEARCH PATTERNS technique.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending down.

### Correction:

Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending down protects the traveler from bumping her head (e.g., on a table or chair under which the object has rolled).

### Error:

The traveler fails to use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when moving forward to search a new area.

### Correction:

Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when moving forward to search a new area protects the traveler's head and face from bumping into furniture or other objects.

**Error:**

The traveler searches the area in front of her but fails to search the areas to her sides.

**Correction:**

Searching to her sides as well as in front helps ensure that the traveler will not miss an object located on her side.

**Error:**

The traveler searches the area in front of her and to her sides, but fails to search between her feet.

**Correction:**

Searching between her feet ensures that the traveler will not miss an object located between her feet.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when rising to stand.

**Correction:**

Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when rising to stand protects the traveler's head from bumping into a table or other object under which she may have moved during her search.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to stop walking the moment she drops an object.

**Correction:**

Stopping at the moment she drops an object and listening for the sound that the object makes as it comes to rest on the ground helps the traveler to begin her search nearest to where she will find the object.

## Notes for Teachers

Teaching this skill can also provide the opportunity to assess the traveler's ability to localize to sound.

This technique also can be used to locate objects that have been previously placed on the ground.

It is generally easier for the traveler to locate objects that she has dropped rather than objects dropped by another person. Also, using commonly dropped objects (e.g., coins, stylus, keys, or pencil) makes the skill most meaningful to travelers who are learning this skill.

## Related Techniques

None

# CONTACTING & EXPLORING OBJECTS

## Purpose

To safely and effectively examine an object that the traveler contacts with her cane

## Prerequisite Techniques

Search Patterns

Upper Hand & Forearm (Modified)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, controlled, and familiar area with a large, familiar object located a few feet in front of the traveler. Begin with objects that have a base (e.g., dresser), and then proceed to objects that don't (e.g., table).

Progress to exploring familiar and unfamiliar objects of varying heights, widths, and shapes.

Introduce the traveler to a variety of naturally occurring objects (e.g., recycling cans, chairs, tabletops, vending machines).

## Skill

A method of using the cane and systematic search patterns to explore an object that the traveler contacts

## Components

### Contacting Objects

1. Upon contacting an object to be explored, the traveler anchors the cane tip (or shaft) against the object (generally with the tip an inch or so above the ground) and then walks up to it.
  - Keeping the cane anchored in this way provides a clear indication of the object's location.
2. As the traveler walks up to the object, she brings her cane into a vertical or semi-vertical position (the semi-vertical position provides the best forward protection as the traveler approaches the object); she slides her hand down to a comfortable position below the grip. The traveler can either:
  - Hold the cane with a pencil grasp, or
  - Rotate her entire arm so that the back of her hand faces her trunk (a motion similar to looking at one's watch). While doing so, she assumes a fist-like grasp on

the cane by wrapping all of her fingers around the shaft and pointing her thumb downward along the shaft (called a “thumb grasp”) (see Figure 3.01).

- Some travelers prefer to perform the latter method if they have been using the handshake grasp previously because it can be more efficient to later return to the handshake grasp from this position than from the pencil grasp position.
- The traveler who holds her cane with a pencil grasp when first contacting the object will not need to adjust her grasp. She simply anchors the cane and then moves it into a vertical or semi-vertical position, sliding her hand down to a position below the grip, as she walks up to the object.



**Figure 3.01**

With her thumb pointing down the shaft and her fingers wrapped around it, the traveler rotates her cane arm and slides her hand to a point below the grip as she walks up to the object.

### **Exploring Objects**

1. To determine the object's width, the traveler can slide the cane shaft left and right along the object's near side.
2. To determine the object's height, the traveler anchors the cane shaft along the near side of the object (if she has not done so already) with the cane tip about 1 inch off the ground, and then she gently pushes the upper part of the cane shaft forward past vertical. By feeling at what point the shaft pivots on the object, the traveler can determine the object's height (see Figure 3.02).



**Figure 3.02**

The traveler gently pushes the upper part of the cane shaft forward past vertical to determine the object's height.

3. The traveler further explores the object using systematic SEARCH PATTERNS technique. She can slide her free hand down the anchored shaft to reach the object, or she can bend down to reach it.
  - If the traveler bends forward to touch the object, she should use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her head and upper trunk from bumping items on or overhanging the object (e.g., hanging plants over a table, swing-arm lamps) (see Figure 3.03).
  - As another option, the traveler can either squat down while keeping her trunk and head erect, or she can turn so that the object is on her side before reaching. Either of these positions will also help her to avoid bumping her head.



**Figure 3.03**

The traveler uses the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her head and upper trunk when bending forward to touch an object.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending forward to explore an object.

### Correction:

Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending forward to explore an object helps protect the traveler from bumping her face on tall objects placed on the table or on objects that may be hanging above the table.

## Notes for Teachers

Give the traveler many opportunities to contact and explore a variety of objects of varying shapes, dimensions, and features. Practice can help refine kinesthetic awareness and can be given in the context of learning how to familiarize oneself with an object.

It is also possible to incorporate instruction in orientation and related skills (e.g., compass directions, measurement, landmarks, clues, cognitive mapping) when teaching this skill.

With curious children it is often just as important to emphasize when it is and when it is not necessary to examine objects within a route. When it is not important to explore a contacted object, the traveler can simply clear the area to the side of the object and resume travel without exploring it (see OBSTACLE IN THE TRAVEL PATH technique).

Provide travel experiences with obstacles in the path where the objectives vary:

- Use exploration lessons in which the objective is to learn about an environment and objects in it; such lessons focus on having the traveler thoroughly explore, describe, or identify objects contacted.
- Use lessons in which the objective is to identify landmarks along a route; use lessons that may involve varying levels of exploration, often just enough to identify the object and its value as a possible landmark but not to describe the object in minute detail.
- Use lessons in which the objective is to arrive at the destination as quickly as possible; the traveler moves around obstacles and does not take time to explore objects that are contacted along the way.



## Related Techniques

Negotiating Doors<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Obstacle in the Travel Path<sup>1</sup>

Seating<sup>1</sup>

Sidewalk Recovery<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Contacting Objects portion of this technique is used when the traveler's cane contacts a closed door, curb, first step of a stairway, obstacle, shoreline, vehicle, or seat. Doing so enables her to position her cane properly as she walks up to the object as a part of performing the specific technique.

# SEATING

## Purpose

Use this technique to locate a seat, verify it is empty, and then sit down, storing one's cane in a safe manner. Variations of this technique are used depending on where one is sitting (e.g., in a chair, at a table, on a bus, or in a theater or restaurant).

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>  
Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>  
Cane Placement (See Appendix B)  
Contacting & Exploring Objects<sup>2</sup>  
Lower Hand & Forearm<sup>3</sup>  
Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>4</sup>  
Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>4</sup>  
Trailing<sup>5</sup>  
Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>6</sup>  
Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>6</sup>  
Upper Hand & Forearm (Modified)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, controlled area. Introduce this technique using a sturdy chair (that will not slide or roll unexpectedly) with a straight back so the traveler can sit down and stand up most easily.

- Gradually expose the traveler to a variety of seats and seating arrangements (e.g., chairs with and without arms, stuffed and hard chairs, a row of chairs, benches, couches, school desks, recliners, lounges, stools, lightweight folding chairs, chairs on wheels, rocking chairs, restaurant booths, and counters).

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<sup>1</sup> BASIC GUIDING skills may be used for Auditorium Seating and for Seating with a Guide.

<sup>2</sup> The Contacting Objects portion of the CONTACTING & EXPLORING OBJECTS technique is used when the traveler's cane contacts the seat. Doing so enables her to position her cane properly as she walks up to the chair and prepares to clear.

<sup>3</sup> Knowing the LOWER HAND & FOREARM technique may enable the traveler to walk safely forward to locate the back of a chair when she is not using a cane.

<sup>4</sup> Knowing REVERSING DIRECTION techniques can be helpful, especially in theater seating when the guide and traveler may need to turn around to return via the same aisle by which they approached their row of seats.

<sup>5</sup> The traveler may use the TRAILING technique to trail the forward row while sidestepping into or out of a row of theater seats. This allows the traveler to easily count seats for the purpose of relocating her seat if she leaves alone during the show.

<sup>6</sup> The traveler can use the TRANSFERRING SIDES technique to move to the proper side of the guide to enter a row of theater seats

Later, introduce more complicated seating skills, such as table seating and auditorium seating.

Practice this technique in a variety of environments that require the use of this skill (e.g., schools, offices, and other public buildings; public parks, cafeterias, theaters, restaurants). In teaching all types of seating, begin in a quiet area and gradually progress to more congested areas in natural environments.

## Skills

### Sitting in a Chair

An effective method for locating a vacant chair, verifying it is empty, and sitting down safely

1. Using her cane or the LOWER HAND & FOREARM technique, the traveler locates the chair. If she contacts the side or the back of the chair, she walks or trails around it to the front (being careful not to disturb anything that may be on the arms or back of the chair).
2. Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique to protect her face from contact with any objects that may be hanging over the chair (e.g., a lamp or hanging plant), the traveler leans down to clear it. She clears the chair by sweeping her fingertips gently down the back of the chair and making an X, circle, or other pattern on the seat (see Figure 4.01).
  - Clearing is done to check for objects on the back or seat and to determine the size and shape of the chair, height of the chair back, presence of arms, surface of the seat, whether or not the chair is stable or movable, etc.
  - Using one's fingertips with a light touch looks most natural and is unlikely to disturb objects on the seat.
  - Some travelers choose to locate the back of the chair using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique and then to keep their hand there as a reference point while clearing the chair with their other hand.



**Figure 4.01**

The traveler clears the chair by sweeping her fingertips gently down the back of the chair and making an X, circle, or other pattern on the seat as shown by white arrows on the chair.

3. If the chair is clear, the traveler turns around and places the back of both legs against the chair; she then sits down gently.
  - Placing the back of both legs against the chair before sitting ensures that the traveler is standing as close to the chair as possible and prevents her from missing the chair as she sits down.
  - If she chooses, the traveler may place a hand on the arm or seat of the chair for support or to ensure the chair does not slide as she sits down.
4. The traveler positions her cane (if present) using the CANE PLACEMENT technique.

## **Sitting at a Table**

An effective method for seating oneself at a table and handling/storing the cane appropriately

### **To Sit**

1. The traveler uses her cane or the LOWER HAND & FOREARM technique to locate the chair; she can simultaneously trail the edge of the table to find the chair.
2. Standing to one side of the chair, the traveler places one hand on the table in a spot immediately to the side of the chair. If she has a cane, the traveler holds it vertically at the edge of the table using the same hand (see Figure 4.02). The traveler then pulls the chair out from the table with her free hand.
  - Placing one hand on the table can also provide a reference point to tell the traveler how far and in what direction to pull out the chair.
  - It is important not to lean on the table because some tables can tip easily.



**Figure 4.02**

The traveler holds the cane vertically at the edge of the table while she pulls the chair out from the table with her other hand.

3. The traveler leans down and clears the chair by sweeping her fingertips gently down the back of the chair and making an X, circle, or other pattern on the seat (as shown in Figure 4.01).
  - Clearing is done to check for objects on the back or seat, and to determine the size and shape of the chair, height of the chair back, presence of arms, surface of the seat, etc.
  - Using one's fingertips with a light touch looks most natural and is unlikely to disturb objects on the seat
4. If the chair is clear, the traveler places the back of both legs against the front edge of the chair and sits down gently.
  - Placing the back of both legs against the chair before sitting ensures that the traveler is standing as close to the chair as possible and prevents her from missing the chair as she sits down.
  - If she chooses, the traveler may place a hand on the arm or seat of the chair for support, or to ensure that the chair does not slide as she sits down.
5. The traveler positions her cane (if present) on the floor using the CANE PLACEMENT technique—her cane is parallel to the edge of the table. She then pulls her chair forward to the table.
  - The traveler may wish to place one foot on the cane shaft to ensure that the cane does not roll away if accidentally kicked by herself or by another person at the table.

### **To Rise**

1. When leaving the table, the traveler slides her chair gently and slowly away from the table.
2. The traveler bends down to get her cane. As she does so, she holds one hand lightly on the table edge (as a reference point to avoid bumping her head on it).

- The traveler must be careful not to put much weight on the table as she bends down because some tables will tip when excessive weight is placed on them.
3. Holding the cane vertically next to the table edge with one hand, the traveler stands up and pushes her chair under the table with her free hand.
    - If the chair is heavy, the traveler may need to use both hands to push it in; the traveler ensures that her cane stays vertical while she does so.

## **Theater and Auditorium Seating**

This skill can be used for seating in any setting in which the seats are designed in long rows (e.g., auditorium, bleacher, sports stadium).

### **Guide Leading**

This is an efficient method for negotiating auditorium or theater style seating when the guide leads the way into the row. It is an alternative to the skill entitled "Auditorium: Traveler Leading."

### **To Enter the Row**

1. The guide and traveler stop alongside their desired row. If the guide is not standing closest to the row they wish to enter, he can instruct the traveler to TRANSFER SIDES. This positions the guide to lead into the row.
2. The guide uses an "arm pull" to bring the traveler forward beside him.
3. The guide and traveler sidestep into the row until both are standing directly in front of their seats. As they do so, the traveler can hold her cane (if she is carrying one) in the same hand that is grasping the guide's arm; she can lightly trail the backs of the seats in the forward row (just below the edge) with the back of her free hand, holding her fingers cupped slightly (see Figure 4.03).
  - Trailing the forward row while sidestepping can help the traveler maintain alignment and allow her to count seats for the purpose of relocating her seat if she leaves alone during show. Trailing the back of the seats with her cupped hand will help her to avoid inadvertently touching a person seated in the forward row or accidentally pulling hair or coats that may be hanging over the backs of these seats.
  - If the traveler finds it uncomfortable to grasp the guide's arm using the GUIDING technique while sidestepping, she may just touch the guide's arm lightly with the back of her hand.
  - If the row is wide enough, the guide and traveler may choose to use the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES technique instead of sidestepping.
  - In some cultures and in some social situations, the man may let the woman lead when entering a row of auditorium seating,



**Figure 4.03**

The traveler uses the back of her hand to trail the backs of the seats in the forward row.

4. The guide and traveler break contact.
5. The traveler clears her seat. She then places the backs of both legs against the seat, and sits down.
  - In theaters or auditoriums with folding seats, the traveler will need to pull the seat down before clearing it and sitting down.
  - If there is insufficient room to turn and face the seat when clearing, the traveler can turn partially toward it or reach behind her to locate the seat back and to clear the seat. This can be physically awkward, however, and generally requires fairly good balance.
6. The traveler positions her cane (if carrying one) using the CANE PLACEMENT technique.

### **To Exit the Row**

1. To exit, the guide rises and crosses in front of the traveler so that he will be in a position to lead the way to the aisle. If the guide and traveler choose to exit at the other end of the row, the guide will not need to cross in front of the traveler.
2. The traveler retrieves her cane (if carrying one) and rises. She then assumes the BASIC GUIDING position next to the guide.
  - Assuming the BASIC GUIDING position after rising prevents the traveler from inadvertently pulling on the guide's arm as she rises to stand.
  - If using the BASIC GUIDING grasp on the guide's arm is uncomfortable when sidestepping, the traveler may choose to just lightly touch the guide's arm with the back of her hand.
3. The guide and traveler sidestep out of the row to the aisle. If the traveler wishes, she may trail the back of the seats in the forward row to maintain her alignment and to confirm when she reaches the aisle.

4. At the aisle, the guide and traveler reverse directions, if necessary, and resume travel.

### **Traveler Leading**

This is an efficient method for negotiating auditorium style seating when the traveler is in the most convenient position to lead. It is an alternative to the skill entitled, "Auditorium: Guide Leading."

#### **To enter the row**

1. The traveler and guide stop alongside their desired row.
2. The traveler leads as they enter the row (sidestepping, if necessary) and uses her cane to locate empty seats. If the traveler wishes, she may release the guide's arm and lightly trail the backs of the seats in the forward row (just below the edge) with the back of her free hand that she holds cupped slightly.
  - Trailing the forward row while sidestepping may help some travelers to maintain alignment and allow them to easily count seats for the purpose of relocating their seat if they leave alone during the show. Trailing the back of the seats with a cupped hand will help avoid inadvertently touching a person seated in the forward row or accidentally pulling hair or coats that may be hanging over the back of the seats.
3. The traveler clears her seat, then turns around and places the back of both legs against the seat. She sits down.
  - In some theaters or auditoriums with folding seats, the traveler will need to pull the seat down before clearing it and sitting down.
  - If there is insufficient room to turn and face the seat when clearing, the traveler can turn partially toward it or reach behind her to locate the seatback and to clear the seat. This can be physically awkward, however, and generally requires fairly good balance.
4. The traveler positions her cane (if carrying one) using the CANE PLACEMENT technique.

#### **To exit the row**

1. The traveler retrieves her cane and stands up. To exit, the traveler rises and crosses in front of the guide so that she will be in a position to lead the way to the aisle. If the guide and traveler choose to exit at the other end of the row, the traveler will not need to cross in front of the guide.
2. She uses her cane to clear the way as she and the guide sidestep out of the row. If she is not carrying a cane, or if she simply wishes, the traveler can lightly trail the back of the seats in the forward row with her free hand to help maintain her alignment and to confirm when she reaches the aisle.
3. The traveler pauses at the main aisle and listens for people walking across her path. When it is clear, she steps into the aisle.



4. The traveler and guide resume travel.

## **Seating with a Guide**

An efficient means of being seated safely when traveling with a guide

1. The guide leads the traveler to a position close to the chair (or other seating surface) and informs her of the chair's presence and location.
2. Using her cane or the LOWER HAND & FOREARM technique, the traveler walks up to the chair.
  - To assist travelers who have poor balance or orientation, the guide can grasp an arm of the chair or the back of the chair and then have the traveler slide her grasp hand down his arm to the chair. If necessary, the guide can take the traveler's grasp hand and place it on the back or arm of the chair.
  - If the traveler is not certain that the guide (e.g., especially an unfamiliar or inexperienced guide) has selected an empty chair, she should clear the seat before sitting down. She may also choose to clear the back and seat of the chair in order to get information about the chair's size.
3. The traveler turns and places the back of both legs against the chair; she then sits down. If the chair is movable or unsteady, the traveler can hold onto the arm or seat of the chair while sitting down
  - If the traveler is a small child or is physically unable to hold the chair steady, then the guide may hold it steady for her.
4. The traveler positions her cane (if carrying one) using the CANE PLACEMENT technique.

## **Common Errors and Corrections**

### **Error:**

The traveler fails to clear the seat before sitting down.

### **Correction:**

Clearing the seat before turning to sit enables the traveler to verify the chair is empty before she sits down.

### **Error:**

The traveler fails to use the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending down to clear the seat.

### **Correction:**

Using the UPPER HAND & FOREARM (Modified) technique when bending down to clear the seat prevents the traveler from bumping her face into objects that may be hanging above the chair.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to place the back of both knees against the chair before sitting down.

**Correction:**

Placing the back of both knees against the chair before sitting down positions the traveler to sit directly in the seat.

**Error:**

The traveler pulls the chair away from the table using the same hand that is holding the cane.

**Correction:**

Holding the cane in her hand that is nearest to the table and pulling the chair away from the table with her free hand, enables the traveler to maintain better control of the cane so that it does not get in the way of other people.

**Error:**

The traveler places her cane underneath the table with the cane shaft perpendicular to the table's length.

**Correction:**

Placing her cane under the table with the cane shaft parallel to the table's length keeps the cane out of the aisle and ensures it will not pose a hazard to others.

**Error:**

When entering or exiting a row in an auditorium, the traveler cups her hand gently over each seatback as she trails the row ahead of her own.

**Correction:**

Trailing the back of the seats when entering or exiting a row in an auditorium ensures the traveler will not inadvertently touch a person sitting in the row ahead.

## Notes for Teachers

In addition to introducing travelers to various types of seats and seating arrangements (e.g., desk chairs, sofa, rocking chair, restaurant booths, counters), it is important to approach the seats from a variety of positions and from different angles to give the traveler experience in positioning herself to clear and to sit down safely.

Occasionally, the teacher can select seats with objects on them in order to emphasize to the traveler the importance of clearing.

## Related Techniques

Automobile Travel

City Bus Travel

Subway Travel

# **HANDLING UNSOLICITED ASSISTANCE**

# WHEN THE TRAVELER IS NOT CARRYING A CANE

## Purpose

Use this technique to accept or decline unsolicited assistance when not carrying a cane. Rather than accepting undesired assistance or assistance that is offered in an improper manner, this technique empowers the traveler to take an active role in determining whether or not she will accept the assistance and, if so, how she will do so.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area that is free of distractions.

Integrate this skill into instruction in all environments that might require the use of this technique (e.g., in public buildings, on street corners).

During the course of advanced instruction, opportunities to practice this technique often occur naturally.

## Skills

### Standard

This is an effective method for accepting or declining unsolicited assistance. It positions the traveler to perform the BASIC GUIDING technique if accepting assistance. It is also an effective means by which the traveler can release any grasp that the person may have on her arm when a verbal decline of assistance does not work.

1. Upon feeling a person grasp her arm in an effort to assist her, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet. She keeps her center of gravity centered firmly over her feet.
  - This prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.
  - This enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.
2. The traveler gently raises her grasped arm diagonally across her body, toward her opposite shoulder.
  - Reaching toward her opposite shoulder decreases the security of the person's grasp on her arm and positions his wrist so that she can grasp it easily (see the next step).

3. If the person does not release his grasp, the traveler can grasp his wrist from below with her free hand, and pull downward gently to release his grasp (see Figure 5.01).
  - It is important to grasp the person's wrist instead of his arm in order to maintain a firm grasp and to control the person's release of her arm.



**Figure 5.01**

The traveler grasps the wrist (from below) of a person offering assistance and pulls downward gently to release his grasp from her arm.

4. The traveler can then either decline or accept the person's assistance.
  - **To decline assistance:**
    - The traveler releases the person's wrist. She thanks the person for offering assistance and states that she does not need it (e.g., "Thank you, but I don't need any assistance right now.")
  - **To accept assistance:**
    - Thanking the person for offering assistance, the traveler states that the BASIC GUIDING technique is easiest for her to use (e.g., "Thank you. May I take your arm?"). The traveler then grasps the person's elbow with her free hand and assumes the proper BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Declining Assistance: Rotating the Trunk**

This is an easy method to decline unsolicited assistance when a person unexpectedly grasps the traveler's arm. This method works especially well for travelers who have difficulty performing the Standard method or when the person has grasped the traveler's shoulder instead of her arm.

1. Upon feeling someone grasp her arm or shoulder, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet.
  - This prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.
  - This enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.

2. The traveler rotates her trunk away from the person who is offering assistance. As she does so, the traveler thanks the person for offering assistance and states that assistance is not needed.

## General Modifications

If the traveler is unable to decline assistance using either of the skills above or if she feels they are not necessary in a given situation, she can simply relax her grasped arm, allowing it to go limp, while keeping her feet firmly in place.

- Relaxing her arm decreases the security of the person's grasp on her arm and communicates to him that his action is inappropriate.
- This method is not always effective, but it may be a viable option for some travelers who are unable or who prefer not to use any of the above methods for declining assistance.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to hold her feet firmly in place when someone grasps her arm or shoulder.

### Correction:

Holding her feet firmly in place when someone grasps her arm or shoulder prevents the traveler from being pushed off balance or inadvertently into a hazard. It also helps travelers who are easily disoriented to avoid losing their orientation when moved unexpectedly from their position.

### Error:

The traveler tries to grasp the person's wrist from above when trying to release his grasp on her arm.

### Correction:

Grasping the person's wrist from below enables the traveler to grasp his wrist most easily and efficiently.

## Notes for Teachers

This skill is also known as the "Hines Break" (Hill & Ponder, 1976). In many situations, simply stating that assistance is not needed or that the traveler would prefer to take the person's arm is all that is necessary. The Hines Break is a method of handling situations in which verbalization alone is not sufficient; it empowers the traveler to take an active role and to regain control of the situation.

Most people approach travelers who are blind with an honest intention to be helpful. It is, therefore, important that the traveler verbally indicate her preference to accept or

decline assistance in a manner that is polite but firm, so the person offering assistance will know the proper way to help travelers who are blind in the future. It is important to not create a scene, embarrass, or offend a person trying to offer assistance.

It is often helpful to teach this skill using role-play activities that give the traveler the opportunity to practice the mechanics of the skill and rehearse what she should say. Because this technique is designed to be used when a person has taken the traveler's arm without warning or permission, practicing this technique in a supportive role-play situation may help to desensitize the traveler to the often uncomfortable experience of having someone unexpectedly grasp one's arm. Initial practice involves slow, gentle offers of assistance, leading up to situations with an increased element of surprise and amount of force used in grasping the traveler's arm (e.g., pushing harder and more suddenly on her arm). In this latter case, the instructor periodically grabs the traveler's arm or shoulder without warning and gives the traveler the opportunity to practice reactions, timing, and verbalizations.

It also may be important to discuss, especially with young or naïve travelers, how to determine whether it would be in their best interest to accept assistance from certain types of people. For example, a traveler might think twice about accepting assistance from someone who appears to be intoxicated or who does not respond to polite requests to use the BASIC GUIDING technique.

As a special note, people usually give offers of assistance when the traveler is standing still (e.g., at a street corner), but they occasionally do so while the traveler is walking. For this reason, it is helpful to practice this skill both while the traveler is standing stationary and while she is moving.

## **Related Techniques**

Handling Unsolicited Assistance (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)



# WHEN THE TRAVELER IS CARRYING A CANE

## Purpose

This technique is used to accept or decline unsolicited assistance when carrying a cane. Rather than accepting undesired assistance or assistance offered in an improper manner, this technique empowers the traveler to take an active role in determining whether or not she will accept the assistance and, if so, how she will do it.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Handling Unsolicited Assistance (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area that is free of distractions.

Practice this technique in situations that typically require this skill (e.g., at street corners or in public buildings or other public areas).

During the course of advanced instruction, opportunities to practice this technique often occur naturally.

## Skills

### If the Non-Cane Arm Is Grasped

This is an efficient method to accept or decline unsolicited assistance when a pedestrian unexpectedly grasps the traveler's non-cane arm.

1. Upon feeling someone grasp her non-cane arm, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet. She keeps her center of gravity centered firmly over her feet.
  - Doing so prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.
  - It also enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.
2. The traveler slides her grasp lower on the cane shaft and positions the cane vertically, with the tip 1–2 inches above the ground.
  - Maintaining the cane in a vertical position prevents it from hitting other pedestrians.
3. The traveler gently raises her grasped arm diagonally across her body, toward her opposite shoulder.

- Reaching toward her opposite shoulder decreases the security of the person's grasp on her arm and positions his wrist so she can grasp it easily.
4. If the person does not release his grasp, the traveler can grasp his wrist from below with her cane hand and pull downward gently to release his grasp.
    - The traveler can grasp the person's wrist with her thumb and forefinger (the remaining fingers wrapped around the cane shaft; see Figure 6.01). She must be careful to hold the cane in a vertical position at all times.



**Figure 6.01**

The traveler grasps the person's wrist with her thumb and forefinger; she holds the cane by wrapping her remaining fingers around the shaft. An inset shows an enlarged view of the traveler's hand and finger positions.

5. The traveler can then either decline or accept the person's assistance.
  - **To decline assistance**
    - The traveler releases the person's wrist. She thanks the person for offering assistance and states that she does not need it (e.g., "Thank you, but I don't need any assistance right now.")
  - **To accept assistance**
    - Thanking the person for offering assistance, she states that the BASIC GUIDING technique is easiest for her to use (e.g., "Thank you. May I take your arm?"). The traveler then grasps the person's elbow with her free hand and assumes the proper BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## **If the Cane Arm Is Grasped**

This is an efficient method to accept or decline unsolicited assistance when a pedestrian unexpectedly grasps the traveler's cane arm.

1. Upon feeling someone grasp her cane arm, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet. She keeps her center of gravity firmly centered over her feet.
  - Doing so prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.
  - It also enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.

The traveler must be careful not to let the cane tip rise in the air if her arm is pushed forward when the person grasps it. Holding the cane in a vertical position prevents it from hitting passersby.

2. Sliding her grasp lower on the cane shaft, the traveler positions the cane vertically with the tip no more than 1–2 inches above the ground and transfers the cane to her other hand.
  - She can hold the cane with a pencil grasp or with her middle, ring, and little fingers (as shown in Figure 6.01, above).
  - Maintaining the cane in a vertical position prevents it from hitting passersby.
3. The traveler then gently raises her grasped arm diagonally across her body, toward her opposite shoulder. If the person does not release his grasp, the traveler can grasp his wrist from below with her cane hand (keeping the cane vertical), and pull downward gently to release his grasp.
4. The traveler can then either decline or accept the person's assistance.
  - **To decline assistance**
    - The traveler releases the person's wrist. She thanks the person for offering assistance, but states that she does not need it (e.g., "Thank you, but I don't need any assistance right now.")
  - **To accept assistance**
    - Thanking the person for offering assistance, she states that the BASIC GUIDING technique is easiest for her to use (e.g., "Thank you. May I take your arm?"). The traveler then grasps the person's elbow with her free hand and assumes the proper BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Declining Assistance: Not Transferring the Cane**

This is a method to decline unsolicited assistance when a pedestrian unexpectedly grasps the traveler's cane arm. While this method eliminates the need to transfer the cane to the other hand, it does provide the additional challenge of maintaining the cane in a vertical position while the traveler releases the person's grasp on her arm.

1. Upon feeling someone grasp her cane arm, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet. She keeps her center of gravity firmly centered over her feet.
  - Doing so prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.

- It also enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.

The traveler must be careful not to let the cane tip rise in the air if her arm is pushed forward when the person grasps it. Holding the cane in a vertical position prevents it from hitting passersby.

2. The traveler keeps the cane in the same hand but slides her grasp lower on the cane shaft and positions the cane vertically, with the tip 1–2 inches above the ground.
  - If the traveler is initially holding the cane with a handshake grasp, she may wish to change to a pencil grasp or a fisted grasp in order to more easily maintain the cane in a vertical position while reaching her grasped arm across her body.
3. The traveler gently raises her grasped arm diagonally across her body. If the person does not release his grasp, the traveler can grasp his wrist from below and pull downward gently to release his grasp (see Figure 6.02).



**Figure 6.02**

The traveler raises her grasped arm diagonally across her body, grasps the person's wrist from below, and pulls downward gently to release his grasp.

4. The traveler releases the person's wrist. She thanks the person for offering assistance and states that she does not need it (e.g., "Thank you, but I don't need any assistance right now.")

## **Declining Assistance: Rotating the Trunk**

This is an easy method to decline unsolicited assistance when a person unexpectedly grasps the traveler's arm. This method works well for travelers who have difficulty manipulating the cane as in the other methods of HANDLING UNSOLICITED ASSISTANCE. This method also works well whenever a pedestrian grasps the traveler's shoulder instead of her arm.

1. Upon feeling someone grasp her arm, the traveler stands firm and does not move her feet. She keeps her center of gravity firmly centered over her feet.
  - Doing so prevents the traveler from either being turned or pushed forward into obstacles or hazards accidentally.
  - It also enables the traveler to maintain her orientation and alignment.

If the pedestrian has grasped the traveler's cane arm, she must be careful not to let the cane tip rise in the air if he pushes her arm forward as he grasps it. Holding the cane in a vertical position prevents it from hitting passersby.

2. The traveler rotates her trunk away from the person. She thanks the person for offering assistance and states that she does not need it (e.g., "Thank you, but I don't need any assistance right now.") (See Figure 6.03.)



**Figure 6.03**

The traveler rotates her trunk away to decline assistance from a person who has grasped her shoulder or arm. A speech bubble in the photo says, "Thanks, but I don't need any assistance right now."

## General Modifications

If the traveler is unable to perform the above skills or feels they are not necessary in a given situation, she can simply relax her grasped arm, allowing it to go limp, while keeping her feet firmly in place.

- Relaxing her arm in this manner makes it more difficult for the person to maintain a strong grasp on it while communicating to him that his action is inappropriate.
- This method is not always effective, but it may be a viable option for some travelers who are unable or who prefer not to use any of the above methods for declining assistance.
- If the traveler should encounter a person who attempts to assist her by pulling on her cane rather than allowing her to take his arm, the traveler can keep her feet planted on the ground firmly and hold tightly onto her cane, or she can let

go of the cane to avoid being pulled into a hazardous situation. While it is always preferable for the traveler to hold onto her cane, this may not always be possible (e.g., if the cane is pulled strongly enough to make her lose balance if she does not let go).

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to hold her feet firmly in place when someone grasps her arm.

### Correction:

Holding her feet firmly in place when someone grasps her arm prevents the traveler from being pushed off balance or pushed forward into a hazard by accident. It also helps travelers who are easily disoriented to avoid losing their orientation when moved unexpectedly from their position.

### Error:

The traveler fails to maintain her cane in a vertical position when reaching for the person's wrist.

### Correction:

Maintaining her cane in a vertical position when reaching for the person's wrist prevents the cane from hitting nearby pedestrians.

### Error:

The traveler fails to transfer the cane to her other hand before reaching for the person's wrist.

### Correction:

Transferring the cane to her other hand before reaching for the person's wrist makes it easier for the traveler to grasp the person's wrist.

### Error:

When a well-intentioned pedestrian grabs the traveler's cane and attempts to guide her by pulling on the cane, the traveler obligingly follows the person's lead.

### Correction:

When a well-intentioned pedestrian grabs the traveler's cane, the traveler should hold her feet firmly in place, and if she is unable to maintain her grasp on the cane without being pulled out of position, she should let go of the cane. The traveler does not have the protection of the cane when someone is pulling on it.

## Notes for Teachers

This skill is also known as the "Hines Break" (Hill & Ponder, 1976). In many situations simply stating that assistance is not needed or that the traveler would prefer to take the

person's arm is all that is necessary. The Hines Break is a method of handling situations in which verbalization alone is not sufficient; it empowers the traveler to take an active role and to regain control of the situation.

Most people approach travelers who are blind with an honest intention to be helpful. It is, therefore, important that the traveler verbally indicate her preference to accept or decline assistance in a manner that is polite but firm, so the person offering assistance will know the proper way to help travelers who are blind in the future. It is important to not create a scene, embarrass, or offend a person trying to offer assistance.

It is often helpful to initially teach this skill using role-play activities that give the traveler the opportunity to practice the mechanics of the skill and to rehearse what she should say. Practicing this technique in a supportive role-play situation may also help to desensitize the traveler to the often uncomfortable experience of having someone unexpectedly grasp her arm without warning or permission. This early practice involves slow, gentle offers of assistance, leading up to situations with an increased element of surprise and amount of force used in grasping the traveler's arm (i.e., pushing harder and more suddenly on her arm). In this latter case, the instructor periodically grabs the traveler's arm or shoulder without warning and gives the traveler the opportunity to practice reactions, timing, and verbalizations.

It also may be important to discuss, especially with young or naïve travelers, how to determine whether it would be in their best interest to accept assistance from certain types of people. For example, a traveler might think twice about accepting assistance from someone who appears to be intoxicated or who does not respond to polite requests to use the BASIC GUIDING technique.

As a special note, people usually give offers of assistance when the traveler is standing still (e.g., at a street corner), but they occasionally do so while the traveler is walking. For this reason, it is helpful to practice this skill both while the traveler is standing stationary and while she is moving.

## Related Techniques

None

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